

An
Inaugural Thesis
on the
Scalæ Cervicium

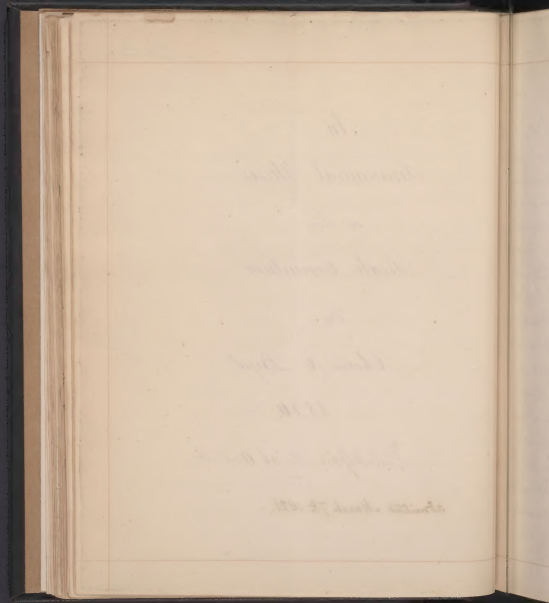
By

Charles C. Byrd

1820.

Philadelphia No. 86 Arch St.

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On The
Fecale Vermium

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On The
Lecale Cornutum.

It is an observation, which has frequently been made, and certainly it is a correct one, that a thorough acquaintance, with the different articles of the *Materia Medica*, is absolutely necessary, to qualify the Physician for the exercise of the important duties of his profession, and, for the advancement of a profession, which has for its object, the alleviation, and cure, of human diseases, no effort should be spared, no means left untried, by which this desirable end can be attained. With these views I do not know that my feeble powers can be better directed, than in investigating the properties of the *Lecale Cornutum*, or as it is called in the vernacular language of France, the *Ergot*, and in that of England and this country, *Spurred eye*, *Horned eye* &c.

No article deserves more the attention of Medical men, than the one before us. It is highly interesting as regards its natural history, eminently important in a practical point of view, and certainly time is not mispent, in searching

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out its deleterious qualities. I shall, therefore, treat of it under these three heads, and though my time, which is, at present, occupied by all those diversified studies embraced in the science of Medicine, will not allow me to enter fully into a discussion, of the merits, and demerits, of the various hypotheses which have been assumed, to explain the origin of this very singular production; still, I shall give such an account of it, as will accord with the opinions held on the subject at the present day.

The Ergot is now supposed to arise from a mushroom of the genus sclerotium, which is of a parasitical nature, and scientifically called *Clavus*. Before this plausible explanation was put forth, many conjectures were held on the subject. It was said at one time to arise from fermentation, and the simple experiments of the Abbe Fontana gave the idea, and certainly with some degree of reason, that it arose from contagion. But Mr. Robandelle, whose opinion I have cited above, has studied the subject with much success, and taught a more correct theory with regard to it. Several of the graminaceous plants are liable to this

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disease, but, more particularly the *rye*, which has been destroyed by it in France, in great quantities. It forms an elongated excrescence, which occupies the place of the grain within the husk of the *rye*; rather larger generally than the seed itself, of a black colour externally, and white within, of a firm texture and disagreeable taste. It is found to occur in greater quantities in wet seasons and a new soil is favourable to its production; it abounds more in some districts of country than others and it delights in a heavy rich soil, agreeing with the *sclerotium* in all these particulars. To explain the manner in which the parasite reaches its place of destination, within the glume of the *rye*, M. de Candolle has devised a very ingenious theory. According to him the seed falls to the ground, mingles with the soil, and is conducted to the interior of the corn plant, by the water that nourishes it, and is finally transmitted by the circulating fluids to the spot destined for its development.

The limits of these pages will not permit me to enter fully into the history of *sclerotium*, and by a course of analogical reasoning to prove the justness of this location.

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of the Ego. We indeed would it is as yet to see further, as we have so well settled, suffice it, therefore, to say that it every circumstance of its origin and development, it so exactly agrees with teleology, as to leave a solution reasonable to us.

With these remarks, I shall conclude what I have to say of the Natural history of the Uterine contraction and proceed to the second division of my course, namely the application of the Ego to the Practice of Midwifery.

To relieve the miseries of the barbarous female and to preserve both the life of herself and infant, a remedy had long been desired, and to furnish one, the inventive genius of man has been employed for ages past. But, all efforts at discovering medicine which should operate significantly on the uterus, and promote the contractions, that violent premature abortion, recourse was had to manual and instrumental aid. These modes however of effecting delivery, though they have been found to be the most successful advantage, by averting in numerous instances the otherwise sure destruction of Mother & child, and

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frequent use of both, or at all times according to the feelings,
and according to the situation of the sensitive system, and
never fail to give the idea. That her situation is serious
in the extreme. The organ, which has been introduced into
practice within the last ten or twelve years, is found to
be necessary, in promoting labour, as in many cases, to
sustain the necessity of turning, and in most instances
to to away the use of the 'except. America claims with
undoubted right the credit of this important discovery,
and seeks terms of the state of New York as the in-
dividual to whom the profession is indebted for this
valuable acquisition. * Examine the annexed the
utility of this article, and indeed the power which it bears
within the strong contractions of the uterus is sufficient
to demonstrated by the rapidity with which it causes
distension in the inferior animals when given to them in a
state of pregnancy, and it taken by a female in an uncon-
scious state, even when it is put in the region of the
uterus. I shall not however dwell on these facts which
are generally established. It is obvious, that an article so

* It seems that the first has been much earlier in France.

[illegible]

powerful in its action as the Ergot should be used with much
caution, and must remain for its administration certain
rules by which we should be governed. From the force and
duration of the contraction brought on by it, it is his the
important to attend to the state of the soft parts; and pre-
vious to exhibiting the medicine we should ascertain that
the Os uterine is sufficiently dilated and yielding; otherwise
we should subject the mother to great pain, and incur
the danger of rupturing the Uterus; an evil that cannot
be too carefully avoided. It is also proper, if the labour be
sufficiently advanced; to satisfy ourselves that the parturition
is natural; for should it be such a one as to require
force, it would be an arduous task if not wholly im-
possible to render successful manual assistance during
the operation of the Ergot, and mischief might arise
from the violence of the contraction. It is now time to point
out such cases as demand the use of the medicine; when we
form cancer, or any other cause the contractile power
of the uterus are destroyed or suspended after having been
once established, when the soft parts are yielding, the

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is thus diluted, the membranes ruptured, and the child
 is delivered quite, it was to give with safety, and
 the result will justify our most sanguine expectations, or
 it will be certain, most, the pains to last, long, fast,
 and not efficacious, and the soft parts are in the proper
 state, the same happy result will follow its administration,
 and the practitioner will have the pleasure of seeing the
 existence of his patient much abridged, and perhaps, ex-
 ceeding the use of the forceps, in avoiding many other
 most com. and dangerous consequences, as hemorrhage,
 exhaustion or death of the mother, and destruction of the
 child, from compression of the umbilical cord, or some other
 casualty. When the soft parts, instead of being in the
 state I have described are rigid and unyielding, and delay
 to dangerous, blood should be drawn from the arm in
 such a quantity as to produce relaxation of the soft fibres,
 and when this end is attained, to proceed with the
 medicine. Here then in the lancet we have a remedy
 which relaxes the circular fibres of the neck and mouth
 & the uterus, whilst in the Ervot we press another,

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which prevents the vicious contractions of its body and
 furrows. We can view this happy arrangement of things
 without being struck with admiration of the wisdom,
 and gratitude for the kindness of Providence, in thus
 placing in our hands means so effectual for the relief
 of the sufferings and danger attendant on parturition,
 which so strongly excite our sympathies, and call for our
 aid. Considering however the painful consequences re-
 sulting from a too hasty administration of the medicine,
 I am led to urge, that the Accoucheur should satisfy him-
 self, by a careful examination of the parts, that the thro-
 wing has produced the desired effect, previous to its use.

The dose of the Elix. and the mod. of giving it are sim-
 ple: twenty grains of it powdered and dissolved in water,
 may be taken at the first dose and if this has not the
 intended effect, it should be repeated in twenty minutes;
 but this, I believe, is rarely necessary. I have seen it given
 in three cases, and in neither of them was the second
 dose required.

This, like all other medicines, met some difficulties in

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occurs the confidence of Medical men, and at one time
 a most formidable objection was alliged against it, namely
 that it frequently proved fatal to the child, by which it
 would at once forfeit all claim to attention; was there the
 slightest foundation for such an allegation, but experience
 has so fully contradicted the charge that were practitioners
 in deriving the action, and evacuating it from
 having any sick effect, and, I believe, it is generally reliev-
 ed, at present, in difficult and tedious labours, occurring
 from a want of action in the Uterus, and its utility allow-
 ed by all who have given it a fair trial.

It is said, and indeed it might be expected, from the
 very nature of the Medicine that Uterine hemorrhages,
 rarely ceases to increase after a delivery affected by the
 tool; and it has been well spoken of as a remedy to re-
 strain alarming flooding. I have never seen the Effect
 as I wish this view, but our knowledge of its modus
 operandi corrects the opinion, as when the tonic
 contractions of the Uterus are wanting, after a part of
 the whole of the placenta has been detached from that

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organ, an haemorrhage is the certain and necessary consequence, and here our remedy surely is the one to fulfil the first, and grand indication, which is to restore the tonic contractions of the Uterus, and by the forcible contractions brought on from the exhibition of the Ergot, the Uterine fibres press on all sides upon the magnified vessels, not only closing their open mouths, but diminishing their enlarged calibars throughout their whole extent, and thus stops the bleeding which might otherwise prove fatal.

I come now to the consideration of the
Agency of the Ergot

in Medicine

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of the Gangrene

It is not my intention, nor indeed could it be expected that I should enter into a full detail of the nature and treatment of this very interesting and terrible disease; for it would almost seem a work of too great length and intricacy to be inserted entire in all its parts, I shall, therefore, leave it to some one more capable than myself of doing justice to the

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subject. As it has been said to our ^{It} grain in many cases to
be true, I shall consider it in that point of view, and as
I have made it an object of my immortal immolation, I
do not despair of coming fairly at the truth, as far, at
least as analogy will go, and I think whoever reads this
paper, will join with me in believing the truth to be re-
sult of heretics highly deleterious to internal life and
intellect. I trust it will no longer be but a matter of doubt,
that it is capable of producing and has often produced,
not much to be dreaded, and terrible disease. The dis-
eases; for it is, at all times, important to discover and
make ^{known} the poisonous qualities of any article, but in the
present instance, I view it as decidedly important; for the
grain &c etc there most suspect is that which is grown
constituted in the tract, as well as many of the inhabitants
of this and most other countries. Extensive and as an
article of food and I am sorry to say, that our crops of
rice are found every year to contain more and more
this vitiated grain, which, unless some means be taken,
to avert the calamity, may be productive of the most

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incurable consequences.

The *Ergot* is though rare, not with in this country, was known many years ago in France: & the periodical weakness of which country we are indebted for much information respecting the disease: The first communication on the subject given to the world, was made by Mr. Lédard in 1676 in a letter inserted into the *Journal des Savans*, by whom it was stated even at that early period, to arise from eating *rye bread*, tainted with the *Ergot*; subsequently M. Lédard directed to the *Hôtel Dieu* of Orleans where there were many patients with *Ergot* mania, remarks that persons attacked with it who live on *rye bread*, too late that states that the extremities of those who have it are as dry as beach wood and as maciated as Egyptian mummies. This disease commences in the extremities or parts most remote from the source of the circulation, attended generally with but little fever inflammation or pain, the limb becomes dead, and is either separated by the abscession, or requires to be removed by the knife. It has always been found to prevail most in those seasons favourable to the

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production of the Crook, and to be confined to those who lived on
 rice: these circumstances are strong of themselves, and need to
 convince all who witness them, that this species of Crook
 had its origin in the use of rice containing the Crook, & has
 never been corroborated by the experiments of Mr. Tassie, which
 proved that levels fed, for some length of time, with the article,
 were attacked with a disease similar to the very dangerous of
 human beings; still however, the question is not settled,
 and doubts are held on the subject even at the present day.
 Not being inclined to satisfy myself with regard to this
 interesting question, I instituted experiments during the
 last summer, on ducks, which though made on a small
 scale, afforded the most conclusive results. I shall give a
 history of them from the time of administering the first
 dose of Crook until the death of the birds.

On the 28th of June 1896, having procured two well
 grown healthy ducks, I commenced by mixing the
 Crook in small quantities in their food, but was unable
 to disguise it in such a way as to get them to eat it;
 finding this to be the case, I determined to force it upon

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one of them in such a quantity as I thought sufficient
for my object, I began this eve, on the 14th of July, and gave
him a third of the Elix^r for him in the dose of 20
grains morning, noon and evening: with this course, I
soon perceived an evident change in the feet, it became
calm, lost its appetite, and there was a discharge of
limpid fluid from the nose and mouth that from
the nose soon became bloody and copious, the back became
enflamed, it was dark and shrivelled, the feet and toes
were black and dead. On the 15th instant this death
died, I rather believe from some accident, for although
labouring under the effects of the Elix^r, mercurification
had not proceeded far enough to produce death alone.
On dissection I found the stomach as it is commonly
called the gizzard red as it is inflamed, the muscles of the
thigh were hard and dry.

On the 16th of July I commenced a precisely similar
course with the remaining duck, but why the disease
redoubled in this case differed from the other, I am quite
at a loss to decide. But the disease here redoubled, whilst

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with much propriety be called wet gangrene, the beak of this duck instead of being dry like the former, was covered with a vesicle, the investing membrane of the bill being much elevated and containing below it a dark coloured fluid; the skin of the legs was covered with moisture, and in a few days more, worms and maggots were generated. The claws now began to fall out, the integuments covering the feet and legs sloughed away, and on the 1st of August it died with its whole body in a state of putrefaction.

From the results of the experiments above stated, I am led to the certain conclusion that the Ergot is capable of producing the Dry Gangrene; but, at the same time, I am convinced, and indeed the fact is mentioned by Mr. Boscawen, that the gangrene is not always of the dry kind, which certainly is proved by my last experiment, the result of which was witnessed by several students, and also by Doctor L. Jackson of this City.

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Geographical Dictionary

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